

Minutes of the May 2005 NOvA Executive Committee Meeting at Fermilab

Present: Dave Ayres, John Cooper, Gary Feldman, Debbie Harris,
Peter Litchfield, Mark Messier, Doug Michael, Leon Muallem,
Gina Rameika, Stan Wojcicki

The NOvA Executive Committee met at Fermilab on Friday afternoon, May 6, 2005, following the final session of the May 5-6 NOvA Collaboration meeting. This was the first meeting of the committee since the results of the ExCom elections were announced on April 25. The committee discussed the following topics.

1. Recruitment of new collaborators. Stan urged the committee to develop an aggressive plan for recruiting new institutions to join NOvA. The cancellation of BTeV and phase out of other major US HEP experiments provides an opportunity to recruit new, strong institutions to NOvA at a time when we need to increase substantially the pace of design and R&D work. Stan noted the importance of giving NOvA talks at universities and labs in the US and overseas to make potential new collaborators aware of NOvA's approval and schedule, and of our need to expand the collaboration. There was a brief discussion of major NOvA tasks that could be assigned to new institutions, e.g., the data acquisition system and detector module assembly facilities. Potential overseas collaborators will not yet have realized the positive impact on NOvA of recent changes at Fermilab, especially the approval of the TAsD detector design and the doubling of proton intensity in the absence of the Collider program. Plans for NOvA talks at summer conferences and recent contacts with potential new collaborators were discussed. Although it has been difficult recently for NOvA to compete with T2K for new collaborators, this could change after the NuSAG review is completed. This might even make it possible for our UK collaborators to obtain a change in the current UK policy that favors UK participation in T2K over NOvA.
2. NOvA Project Management. John reported that the Lab is planning to set up the NOvA Project organization on a rapid time scale. He mentioned a number of experienced and capable people who are being considered for key support-staff positions. Several candidates for Project Manager have been discussed by Lab management and a decision will be made soon. A likely outcome is that John himself will become Project Manager with Ron Ray as his Deputy. The committee expressed its enthusiastic support for this choice. If John should be appointed, he proposed to retain his position as NOvA Co-Spokesperson until the end of his one-year term in February 2006. The committee felt that it was reasonable for John to occupy both positions for this period. The Project Manager appointment must be approved by the DOE so it could take some time before the position is formally filled. After the establishment of the NOvA Project organization, an important next step is to set up a Work Breakdown Structure and to appoint WBS Level 2 Managers. Doug noted that the current focus on R&D work should be reflected in the initial choice of subtask managers and that the NOvA Project organization should allow for a change to WBS Level 2 Managers for construction work following a successful CD-2 Baseline review.

3. Organization of NOvA detector R&D work. John reviewed his proposal to assign R&D responsibilities as outlined in the spreadsheet he presented at the NOvA meeting. Doug noted the importance of addressing the most important design issues with high priority, especially improving the scintillator light output, proving the structural stability of the detector, acquiring and studying prototype APD readout and cooling systems, determining the requirements for supernova detection and estimating the specifications and cost of a far detector overburden. The committee also discussed the importance of providing NOvA funds to support R&D effort at collaborating institutions and whether we should hire an external consultant to review detector structural issues at this time or organize an internal Fermilab engineering review first.
4. Process for making NOvA technical decisions. The NOvA Bylaws say that the ExCom is responsible for establishing procedures for making technical decisions but are unclear about who actually makes final decisions. There was a brief discussion about the need to set up a committee soon to review the far detector overburden issue. There was general agreement that we should set up technical reviews of specific topics as needed, as opposed to establishing a general review process. The committee agreed with Gary's proposal that the ExCom should meet regularly between collaboration meetings to monitor the progress of R&D and design work. The need to set up more working group telephone meetings or, in the short term, to expand the scope of the Tuesday mechanical engineering meeting, was also recognized. This might involve changing the time of the meeting so that more people could attend, at least during the summer. John noted that the inability to find a better time for the meeting has prevented an expansion in scope until now.
5. ExCom telephone meetings. It was tentatively agreed that the ExCom should have a telephone meeting on Wednesday, June 1 at 1 pm Fermilab time. [Note added: this time may have to be changed because it conflicts with the first NuSAG meeting.]